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The Presiding Bishop's Fund Plans for the Future DPS 89001

NEW YORK (DPS, Jan. 12) -- The Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief is planning for the future while meeting current crises as they appear. Planning is geared to equipping this vital aspect of the Church's ministry with the most effective possible organization and the capability of responding swiftly and efficiently with help whenever and wherever it is needed.

On November 15, 1988, at the Executive Council Meeting held at the Episcopal Church Center in New York, the Rt. Rev. Furman C. Stough, who currently administers the Presiding Bishop's Fund, was elected vice president of the Executive Council of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America -- the Church's corporate aspect.

Stough, who became Deputy for the Presiding Bishop's Fund in the fall of 1988, became Senior Executive for Mission Planning, Stewardship and Development on January 1, 1989, when Stewardship and Development became part of Mission Planning. The Rev. Bill Caradine has become Executive for Mission Planning. Mrs. Nancy Marvel is the Manager/Operation Officer for the Fund, and the Rev. Ronald Reed is Manager/Operation Officer for Stewardship Development.

A new series of publications, called Lifeline, is being inaugurated by the Presiding Bishop's Fund. The publications will be in newspaper format and will be produced each time the Fund sends a team to a country or area that has suffered a disaster or crisis to which the Fund has responded. The First issue of Lifeline is devoted to Nicaragua and the devastation wrought by Hurricane Joan. It focuses on Episcopalians in Nicaragua.

Lifeline may be ordered from the Office of the Presiding Bishop's Fund by calling 1-800-334-7626, ext. 384.

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National Cathedral to Host Inauguration Prayer Service DPS 89002

NEW YORK (DPS, Jan. 12) -- On January 4, at a briefing held at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., plans were announced for an interfaith service of prayer and thanksgiving to be held at Washington Cathedral on Sunday, January 22. The service will be the final event of five days of ceremonies and festivities commemorating the inauguration of George Herbert Walker Bush and James Danforth Quayle as President and Vice President of the United States. Mrs. James A. Baker, III, is honorary chairman of the event. The general chairman is the Rev. Roy Pfautch.

The service, to be attended by President and Mrs. Bush, Vice President and Mrs. Quayle, members of their families, and others, will be the centerpiece of a National Day of Prayer and Thanksgiving, as well as the final official event of the American Bicentennial Presidential Inaugural.

A letter from President-elect Bush will be sent to more than 200,000 congregations encouraging them to use portions of the national service in their own worship services on Inaugural weekend. Excerpts from the national service, including special litanies composed especially for the occasion by Washington Cathedral's Canon Precentor R. Wayne Dirksen, will be included with the President-elect's letter.

Religious groups of all denominations will also be asked to ring their bells at noon on January 22 as an expression "of our gladness for the blessings the Lord has given."

"It is the desire of the Bushes and the Quayles that we appropriately conclude the Inaugural festivities with quiet reflection and prayer," said Inaugural Co-Chairman Penne Percy Korth, speaking at the briefing. "Americans everywhere," she continued, "will worship together in the Washington Cathedral and in thousands of churches across the United States, to humbly acknowledge the true source of our nation's strength."

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Korth was joined at the briefing by her fellow Inaugural Co-Chairman, Bobby Holt; by the Rev. Roy Pfautch, General Chairman of the National Day of Prayer and Thanksgiving; and by the Rev. Canon Leonard Freeman of the Washington Cathedral.

Holt described the service as "a truly national observance," saying, "As we gather together for this day of prayer and thanksgiving, we will be one people united in prayer, asking God's blessings on our country's leaders and its people."

The service, as outlined at the briefing, will be patterned on a simple morning prayer service of lessons, music, prayers, and preaching. The Rt. Rev. John T. Walker, Episcopal Bishop of Washington and the Dean of the Washington Cathedral, will preside. The Rev. Charles A. Perry, Provost of the Cathedral, will officiate

The Prelude, at 10 a.m., will feature the Walt Whitman High School Choirs and the Brass Ensemble of the United States Marine Band.

The service, at 11 a.m., will begin with a procession led by the Cathedral Choir of Men and Boys and the Howard University Concert Choir.

The service will be divided into three parts: "Caring for the People of America," "Caring for God's Creation," and "Reconciliation of the Peoples of the Earth." It will include homilies by the Rev. Professor Peter Gomes, Minister of the Memorial Church at Harvard University; the Hon. John Ashcroft, Governor of Missouri; and the Most Rev. Edmond L. Browning, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church.

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[FEATURE] Windows to Heaven

DPS 89003

by Patricia Gordon Michael, Director, Staten Island Museum of Art

NEW YORK (DPS, Jan. 12) -- Icon painting is an ancient and still vibrant tradition. The earliest icons extant are catacomb paintings of the first century A.D. One of the most recent is the icon of the Mother of God of Yaroslav, painted in the fall of 1988 by the Reverend John H. Walsted for the Chapel of Christ the Lord at the Episcopal Church Center in New York City.

By definition, icon (from the original Greek) means "to participate in the nature of the original." The word appears in the first chapter of Genesis: God creates humanity as an icon of himself. God creates us, not as a portrait or a mirror image, but to participate in the very nature of God. God is the first iconographer, and we are all the icons of God.

The earliest known icons are those of the catacomb paintings. Painters of icons followed the form of those first images throughout subsequent eras: Roman, Byzantine, Romanesque. A cross-fertilization of ideas and methods occurred, but there remained one basic tradition of sacred art until the Renaissance. Examples of this tradition are found in the mosaics at Ravenna, Italy, in the bas-reliefs at Chartres, France, in the portraits of the saints with their distinctive attributes made recognizable to all. These icons are not decoration. They portray for the worshipper the idea that the congregation includes not only those present but also the saints and angels in heaven. The icons enable us to visualize participation in the very nature of God; they allow us to look into heaven.

There was only one traditional form of depicting religious subjects until the Renaissance. Then, sacred art in the West became "humanistic"; there was a departure from traditional form, from adherence to a complete system of symbols and techniques to communicate readily understood truths. With the Renaissance, there

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began in the West the continuing process of change of technique and inspiration, of the reliance on human forms and landscapes to depict sacred subjects. Art became a response and an interpretation.

In the Eastern world, there was nothing comparable to the Renaissance in the visual arts. Forms and methods of painting became strictly controlled, almost rigid. Visual images conveyed the truth of God; the ways to communicate that truth, in the Eastern tradition, had to remain stable. For the Orthodox, just as the word of God is communicated in Scripture through the written word in text that never varies (although translations may be updated), so, too, is the word of God conveyed through the visual image of the icon. There was and is a canon of icon painting just as there is a canon of Scripture. If the painting is faithful to tradition, it is the image it presents, not simply a representation. (In the present day, the Orthodox Church accepts what enters into the Canon of Icons, although this is not a formal procedure.) Icons do not convey emotion; they present a relationship that extends beyond the object itself.

The continuing tradition of icon painting represents a deliberate rejection of Western ideas about art. The perspective is reversed deliberately. Heaven cannot be portrayed in a diminishing field, only in an expanding one. Present-day icons are not primitives; the reverse perspective they present is a design convention. As Father Walsted describes it, the person viewing the icon is assumed to be part of the icon. "By virtue of Baptism, we are already part of heaven; we can look outside from the icon at the world in its diminishing field."

Walsted continues with the explanation: "A window is a means whereby we penetrate a solid wall to see the landscape beyond. We see the landscape framed by the window. The farther away we are from the window, the smaller the landscape appears. Conversely, the closer we come, and step out, we are surrounded by an immense landscape. Heaven is a huge expansive universe, a dimension beyond our ken. It is that dimension the icon invites the viewer to explore."

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The icon in the Chapel of Christ the Lord in Manhattan is of the Mother of God of Yaroslav. It is painted in the tradition of Northern Russia of the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries -- in the cities of Moscow, Novogord, and Yaroslav. As Father Walsted explains, this tradition represents "the crowning achievement of all icon painting. It is the least influenced by Western Renaissance influence, and predates Peter the Great and the subsequent Westernization of Russia. After the sixteenth century, icon painting became obsessed with detail and decorative elements, and the icons lost the directness of their import and impact."

The Mother of God of Yaroslav is one of the "tenderness" icons. It depicts a less formal, more sympathetic interplay between mother and child, particularly noted in the deferential tilt of the head of the mother toward the child. The child's cheek is pressed against the mother's cheek; the child cups the mother's chin in a playful manner. It is less severe and less solemn than other icons of the same subject; there is a playful element representing the human relationship between Christ and his mother.

Walstead has been fascinated by icons since his college days when, in 1951, he first saw a group of them at the University of Oregon. He became interested in the methods and materials used, and began researching the tradition. Although there was very little information available about icons in the United States at that time, Walsted, in the course of his studies in art conservation, found some reprints of early manuals of icon painting. The focus of his interest on icons continues a life in art that began in earliest childhood. After graduating from college with a degree in history (emphasis on the history of architecture), Walsted studied with Frank Dorland in Santa Barbara, California, concentrating on the conservation of early wood panel painting, especially Greek and Russian icons of the early periods. He received his M. Div. degree from the Church Divinity School of the Pacific and was ordained to the priesthood in December 1959. He was curate at St. Paul's Church, Salem, Oregon, from 1959 to

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1961, and vicar of St. Andrew's, Portland, Oregon, from 1961 to 1963, after which he entered the Order of the Holy Cross. After fourteen years in the order, he was dispensed in 1978.

While a member of the Order of the Holy Cross, Walsted was assistant novice master and then prior of the motherhouse of the order in West Park, New York. During this time, he continued to perfect his art of icon painting, as well as studying the history of icons and investigating the methods of conservation of the images. He spent six months at the Kelham Theological Seminary, Kelham, England, and lectured at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and to study groups and seminars throughout the United States.

In August 1983, Walsted became rector of Christ Church, Staten Island, New York, and in the subsequent five and one-half years has led that congregation to a resurgence of physical, material, and spiritual growth and renewal. He has painted three icons for Christ Church: The Transfiguration, which hangs above the baptismal font; the Vladimir Mother of God, which hangs on the Epistle side, near the entrance to the chapel; and a double-sided processional cross. His other commissions include the nine-foot icon cross at the Holy Cross Monastery Chapel in West Park, New York, and works for private collectors as well as churches throughout the United States and in Canada, England, and West Germany.

The present icon, the Yaroslav Mother of God, was commissioned by the Presiding Bishop for the Chapel of Christ the Lord. It was painted between September 1 and November 20, 1988, according to the age-old tradition of icon painting.

Icons require natural materials; all categories -- animal, vegetable, and mineral -- must be represented so that all parts of nature may be included in the finished icon. These include the wooden panel; the gesso covering (a mixture of gypsum, rabbit skin glue, and ground marble); egg tempera (pure yolk of egg mixed with a small amount of alcohol and ground mineral pigments); and natural varnishes.

The process of creating an icon begins with the selection of the wooden panel; any size is suitable, according to the artist's choice. The portion of the panel where the central action of the icon will be painted is carved out so that there is a depression in the panel. This feature is an important characteristic of Russian icons. The panel is braced with wood in the back to prevent warping. The traditional wood is limewood, but this is difficult to obtain in the United States. Any nonresinous wood is permissible: Honduras mahogany, basswood, linden.

The gesso covering follows in one of two methods: either a linen cloth saturated with gesso is stretched on the board, or the gesso is layered directly onto the wooden panel to one-sixteenth of an inch thickness. The gesso-covered surface is then sanded to produce a smooth, ivory-like surface.

The image is then drawn directly onto the smooth gessoed panel with silverpoint. Some artists do the drawing first on paper and then transfer it to the panel; Walsted works directly on the panel.

Next follows the pastilia -- the patterned raised work that highlights the gilded areas of the icon. This is an ornamental technique achieved by thickened gesso brushed on in patterns.

Then the gold leaf is applied, using a mordant gilding process. The gold leaf adheres to a sizing and is applied only where the gold will be shown on the painting. Gold is a poor medium on which to paint, and so it must be applied first to avoid flaking afterward.

The figure in the icon is then outlined in lamp-black pigment. All the flesh tones are filled in at once in a three-step process: (1) Terra verde (an earth-green pigment) is applied; (2) there follows a glaze with transparent tones of Venetian red, yellow ochre, and titanium white; and (3) light glazes of rose madder are applied. The layering process results in hundreds of layers of nearly transparent pigment, creating an effect of depth.

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Then the artist paints in everything else that remains to be completed. The entire work is left to set. After the curing period, shellac is applied to the surface of the work, and then it is lacquered. The last steps in the finishing process are wet sanding the lacquer, followed by burnishing the surface with lemon oil and pumice. In such a complex and detailed way, another icon is added to the canon, another link is forged in the age-old chain of the communication of God's truth to his creations.

Interest in icon painting is increasing in our time. There are about twenty painters of icons in the United States at present, and there are centers of icon painting in Europe. There is a revival of the Byzantine style in the monastic community at Mt. Athos in Greece. Even in the Soviet Union, icon painting continues. What we now consider traditional Russian lacquer painting -- Palekh boxes, for example -- is an outgrowth of seventeenth century icon painting techniques and traditions.

The interest in icons, however, is an interest in more than art history. The interest reflects a timeless search for truth, a search that uses many tools and techniques. The writer Saul Bellow has said that "art has something to do with the achievement of stillness in the midst of chaos. A stillness which characterizes prayer, too...something to do with an arrest of attention in the midst of distraction." The icon is our window to heaven, our means to achieve that stillness, that arrest of attention from earthly matters so that we concentrate on the heavenly universe that is our true goal.

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

(89003/1) The Rev. John H. Walsted at work in his Staten Island studio on the icon of the Mother of God of Yaroslav commissioned by Presiding Bishop Edmond L. Browning for the chapel at the Episcopal Church Center.

Photo credit: Bill Higgins

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(89003/2) Metropolitan Theodosius, Primate and Metropolitan of the Orthodox Church in America (foreground), and Presiding Bishop Edmond L. Browning (center) dedicate the icon of the Mother of God of Yaroslav in the Chapel of Christ the Lord at the Episcopal Church Center on December 15, 1988.

Photo credit: Rochelle Arthur

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Japanese Anglicans React to Death of Emperor

DPS 89004

NEW YORK (DPS, Jan. 12) -- Emperor Hirohito of Japan, who reigned as head of state for 62 years, died in Tokyo on January 7. He was 87 years old, and his reign was longer than that of the 123 emperors who preceded him. According to Japanese tradition, Hirohito's 55-year-old son Akihito was proclaimed emperor on the same day as his father's death.

Although Hirohito had become a familiar and much-loved figure to many Japanese in the course of his long reign, many people also remembered his role in World War II as national leader during the period of Japan's aggressive imperial expansion and his former role in Japan's state Shinto religion as a divine descendant of Amaterasu, the Shinto sun goddess.

Although Hirohito renounced his "divinity" after Japan's surrender, and the nation became a constitutional monarchy on the Western model (with the sovereign as a symbolic rather than an actual leader), and gained a good deal of religious freedom, many of Japan's Christian leaders were alarmed by the possibility of a resurgence of Shinto's power in Japan. They saw the role Shinto traditionally plays in the rites and ceremonies surrounding the death of an emperor and the accession of a new ruler as in some ways threatening to the continuing liberty other religious bodies have enjoyed in Japan since the end of World War II.

At many points in the history of Japan, and most notably in the World War II era, Shinto and its connection with the institution of imperial rule were used as a focus for nationalistic and often militarist fervor.

The Most Rev. Christopher Kikawada, the Anglican primate of Japan, issued a statement on the death of Hirohito that both affirmed the place the emperor had held in the hearts of his

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people, while also taking into account the problems the emperor's role in Japan's twentieth century history raised - both political and religious.

Recalling the problems Christians faced in Japan during World War II, Kikawada wrote, "...the Church was in a great dilemma, between being faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ and being loyal to Tenno [the Japanese word for Emperor] as the expression of our patriotism."

Kikawada also pointed out the specific dangers of the period surrounding mourning for the emperor and his funeral. "It will be necessary for us to be vigilant in the coming days to observe what kind of Shinto ceremony will be performed for the funeral and then for the enthronement of the new Tenno. We hope that these ceremonies will not be used for the purpose of deifying Tenno [meaning, in this case, the entire institution of imperial rule] again, and sanctifying the Japanese nation, or for making Tenno...the central norm of all values."

Kikawada, however, is careful to draw lines for Japanese Christians who were as moved by the death of the emperor as were Japanese of other faiths. "We are not saying that we should not pray for Tenno. Rather we say that when we pray we should take into consideration those things we have mentioned....Nor are we saying that we should not respect Tenno. Rather we need to have a sure principle and certain objectivity to live with the Tenno System [i.e., the imperial system], particularly after we have learned our lessons from the past. Therefore, we seek your understanding of our position that we should refrain from joining any ceremonial events relating to the funeral or enthronement, from singing and praying which might be seen as beatifying Tenno in a public service of the Church, and we should not suspend any church activities or events because of these public, semi-national ceremonies. We trust that you will follow your

Christian conscience in deciding what the Church should and should not do in this particular moment in history."

Kikawada, the head of Nippon Seikokai (the Holy Catholic Church in Japan, as the Anglican Church of Japan is called), is the leader of some 60,000 Japanese Anglicans. Nippon Seikokai has 11 bishops, 350 clergy, and 316 congregations. Christians of all denominations constitute 8 percent of the total population of Japan.

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THE CHURCH IN BRIEF

Virginia Supports Armenian Relief

DPS 89005

NEW YORK (DPS, Jan. 12) -- On December 23, 1988, the Rt. Rev. Peter James Lee, Bishop of Virginia, sent a check for \$15,000 to the Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief to aid efforts on behalf of the people of Soviet Armenia. The check represented a special offering made by the people of the diocese.

Immediately following the December earthquake in Armenia, Lee contacted all parishes in his diocese and asked that on Sunday, December 11, congregations offer prayers for the victims of the quake; he also indicated that financial contributions might also be made through the diocesan office in Richmond. By December 23, Lee's office had received \$15,000 for Armenian relief; individuals and parishes also had the option of sending donations directly to the Presiding Bishop's Fund.

In a letter to the Rt. Rev. Furman Stough of the Presiding Bishop's Fund, Lee wrote, "This check represents the outpouring of special gifts throughout the Diocese of Virginia. We send it with our prayers for the Armenian people and with thanksgiving for the role of the Presiding Bishop's Fund in meeting their needs."

Sherman Anniversary Observed on Long Island

NEW YORK (DPS, Jan. 12) -- The Feast of the Epiphany, January 6, 1989, marked the 40th anniversary of the ordination of Bishop Jonathan G. Sherman, retired diocesan of Long Island. The Holy Eucharist celebrated in the Cathedral of the Incarnation in Garden City, New York, recalled the service of consecration for Sherman that had been held in the same cathedral on the Epiphany in 1949.

Four bishops con-celebrated the Eucharist. Bishop Richard B. Martin, former suffragan of Long Island, preached the

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sermon, citing examples of Sherman's ministry as leader and teacher. In his own greeting to the people, Sherman recalled the many distinguished bishops who had participated in his ordination.

A reception for the bishop and wife, Chris, followed the service. Among the many who turned out in the face of driving snow were several people who had attended the 1949 ceremony.

Sherman was born in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1907. Ordained to the priesthood in 1934, he served in Long Island parishes until he was elected bishop suffragan in 1948, holding that post until the death of Diocesan Bishop James P. De Wolfe in 1966. Sherman was then elected diocesan and led Long Island as its fifth bishop until his retirement in 1977.

Spiritual Revitalization Is Theme in Ohio

NEW YORK (DPS, Jan. 12) -- In early December 1988, representatives of a number of devotional, renewal, and missionary groups in the Episcopal Church met in Cleveland, Ohio, to discuss the spiritual revitalization of the Church.

The Cleveland meeting made preliminary plans for helping to implement the Decade of Evangelism (1990-2000) mandates set by the Church's 1988 General Convention.

In the course of the meeting, a common concern was expressed for biblical teaching, worship, and morality. The group also affirmed the need for a concerted effort to reverse the loss of membership in the Episcopal Church, and to return to a healthy pattern of growth.

Among those attending the gathering were representatives of the Brotherhood of St. Andrew, the Bible Reading Fellowship, the Prayer Book Society, the Church Army, Episcopalians United for Revelation, Renewal and Reformation, and Episcopal World Mission.

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Bishop Jones Marks Multiple Anniversaries

NEW YORK (DPS, Jan. 12) -- On December 11, 1988, a triple celebration was held at Emmanuel Church in Rapid City, South Dakota, in honor of the Rt. Rev. Harold Jones, retired suffragan of South Dakota and his wife, Blossom. Jones was observing the 50th anniversary of ordination to the diaconate, his 50th wedding anniversary, and his birthday on December 24.

Jones was the first and, for many years, the only bishop of Native American lineage in the Episcopal Church. He was ordained deacon on December 9, 1938, and, five days later, was married.

Jones began his ministry on the Pine Ridge Mission in South Dakota, living first at Christ Church, Red Shirt Table. He spent nine years at Pine Ridge -- serving until 1947, when he was assigned to the Cheyenne River Mission in South Dakota as superintending presbyter. In 1952, Jones returned to Pine Ridge as superintending presbyter.

From 1956 to 1958, Jones served at Trinity Church, Wahpeton, North Dakota, as vicar and director of Christian education for the Protestant children of the Wahpeton Indian School.

Blossom Jones was always a partner in her husband's work with children, teaching in Bureau of Indian Affairs schools and public schools wherever he was serving. The couple have one daughter, Norma.

On September 25, 1971, a special diocesan convention in South Dakota elected Jones suffragan bishop. He was ordained and consecrated bishop in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, on January 11, 1972. Ill health forced his retirement in 1976.

Jones and his wife continue to live in Rapid City. They have three grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

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COMISS Is Inaugurated in Minneapolis

NEW YORK (DPS, Jan. 12) -- As 1988 drew to a close, a beginning was marked at Central Lutheran Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Representatives of some 42 groups -- including the Episcopal Church -- signed bylaws creating the Congress on Ministries in Specialized Settings (COMISS), a new and unusually diverse coalition bringing together faith groups and organizations of pastoral care and counseling professionals.

"COMISS is born. Let us stand and give thanks!" announced the Rev. Duane Parker, a United Methodist minister who was chair of the preparatory council for COMISS.

Many groups not usually a part of ecumenical ventures joined COMISS. These groups included the Southern Baptist Convention (Home Missions Board), the United States Catholic Conference, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, the Assemblies of God, the New York Board of Rabbis, the Christian and Missionary Alliance, the Christian Reformed Church, the Church of God in Christ, the Church of the Nazarene, the Conservative Baptist Association, the Evangelical Covenant Church, the Mennonite Church, the Salvation Army, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and the Unitarian Universalist Association.

In addition to the Episcopal Church, other member denominations include the American Baptist Churches U.S.A., the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Greek Orthodox Church, the Presbyterian Church U.S.A., the Reformed Church in America, the United Church of Christ, and the United Methodist Church.

Among professional and provider organizations that joined COMISS were the American Protestant Health Association, the National Association for Ministries in the Workplace, the Catholic Health Association, the American Association on Mental Retardation (Religious Division), the American Association of Pastoral Counselors, the American Correctional Chaplains, the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, the Association of Mental Health Clergy, the College of

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Chaplains (American Protestant Health Association), the National Association of Catholic Chaplains, and the National Institute of Business and Industrial Chaplains.

As one of its first official acts, COMISS presented its International Pastoral Care Award to an Episcopalian, the prominent psychoanalyst and writer Erik Erikson of Cambridge, Massachusetts. Erikson was honored for "exceptional contributions" to the pastoral care movement.

Another pastoral care award was given by the Dialogue '88 Coordinating Council of COMISS to Auxiliary Bishop Augustin A. Roman of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Miami for his mediation efforts during the 1987 federal prison takeovers by Cuban detainees held in Oakdale, Louisiana, and Atlanta, Georgia.

COCU Calls for Greater Unity

NEW YORK (DPS, Jan. 12) -- On December 9, 1988, at the conclusion of a meeting in New Orleans, representatives of nine major religious bodies called for greater unity in witness, sacraments, and service for more than 22 million Christians in the United States.

In a unanimous vote, COCU, the Consultation on Church Union, sent a new agenda to the top legislative assemblies of its member churches. The churches are asked to approve the COCU formulation "as the definitive agreement for joining with other participating churches in covenant communion." Final action by the nine churches is not expected to be completed before the mid-1990s, at the earliest.

The covenanting proposal affirmed in New Orleans is the culmination of more than 25 years of study, debate, and agreement in COCU. The plan is described by one of its principal architects as "a biblical format to bring Christians together sociologically and theologically to meet today's needs and those of the future." Under the proposal, the nine member churches will recognize each other's baptism, membership, and ordained clergy. Congregations in a given

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community will celebrate Holy Communion together regularly, and will plan joint mission and service.

Each of the nine churches can retain its own name, form of church government, worship, and patterns of ministerial training and placement. "Church of Christ Uniting" will be added traditional names of the covenant churches.

The proposal adopted in New Orleans is grounded in a consensus on theology reached at COCU's 1984 Plenary in Baltimore. Since then, six of the nine churches have accepted the theological agreement as the basis for the next step. The 1988 General Convention of the Episcopal Church commended portions of the statement, but said that additional work was needed before it could be accepted as a sufficient basis for covenanting acts.

Bishop Edward W. Jones, who headed the Episcopal delegation in New Orleans, told Plenary participants that "an uncertainty about covenanting" hung over his Church's consideration of the theology consensus. However, he added, "we have a commitment to continue."

Religious bodies in the Consultation are the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, the Episcopal Church, the International Council of Community Churches, the Presbyterian Church U.S.A., the United Church of Christ, and the United Methodist Church.

Conference Seeks Spiritual Center

NEW YORK (DPS, Jan. 12) -- Responding to the call of the Presiding Bishop and the President of the House of Deputies, 20 representatives of renewal movements, monastic communities, Church institutions, seminaries, and commissions in the Episcopal Church gathered at the Stony Point Conference Center in Stony Point, New York, December 2-4, 1988, to seek the spiritual center of the various ministries in the Church. The theme of the conference was "Spirituality Partners."

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Led by the Rev. Thomas McElligott of Indianapolis, the participants affirmed Jesus Christ to be the focus of unity in the widely divergent approaches to spirituality of the organizations represented, while recognizing the significant cultural differences, differences in theological understanding, values, and the approach to God through prayer found among Episcopalians.

Much of this diversity was incorporated in the dialogue, as conference participants prayed together, shared their personal spiritual journeys, and searched for threads of common approach and concern.

In the course of the Stony Point conference, plans were made to continue the work of building bridges between the Church's divergent spiritualities, and seeking in common to contribute to the deepening of the spiritual life of the Episcopal Church. The conference was coordinated by the Rev. A. Wayne Schwab of the Office of Evangelism Ministries of the Episcopal Church Center.

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